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To: Mr. John Almstrom,
Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator (North) UNOHCIFrom: Jayanti Prasad
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Resident Auditor, UNOHCI
Audit and Management Consulting Division, OIOSSubject: Security issues in Northern Iraq

The recommendations set out below are submitted for your consideration. Please comment on them and, where appropriate, specify the corrective action taken or provide a planned implementation schedule. When commenting please refer to the Assignment No. listed above and to the recommendation number in parenthesis in order to facilitate monitoring of its status (timely response, acceptance, implementation). Please reply by 31 December 2000.

Audit Observations and Recommendations

1. The United Nations Guard Contingent in Iraq (UNGCI), has been mandated to protect both UN personnel and operations associated with the implementation of SCR 986 in the three Northern Governorates of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulamaniya. The main responsibilities of the UNGCI, inter-alia, are (i) Monitoring the security situation in the region, where this has a direct bearing on the SCR 986 programme, in cooperation with the United Nations office of the Humanitarian Coordinator of Iraq (UNOHCI), (ii) provide escort and protect UN personnel, (iii) provide communications network to all UN Agencies and personnel, (iv) provide medical support to all UN personnel and (v) to protect the Humanitarian Programme in the North. While this audit observation deals with security issues in Erbil, the recommendations should be implemented also in Dohuk and Suleimaniya.

Radio check procedures

2. UNGCI carries out 'Radio check' at 20:00 hours for all international staff in Erbil through its radio control room and personnel (Echo control). This radio check by UNGCI has three fold purpose; (i) to ensure and verify that all UN personnel stationed in North Iraq are safe, (ii) to ensure that all radio sets, having been provided to the staff by their respective Organisations are operational and (iii) to ensure that UN staff members learn and are comfortable with the radio procedures and the use of radios. Purpose (ii) and (iii) of the foregoing, are basically to ensure that effective communication can be established between the staff and the UNGCI at all times (or vice versa) should an emergency arise.

3. The UNGCI, on an average radio check, contacts around 124 UN International Staff in addition to 30 UNGCI staff at Erbil Location (on a different frequency).

4. It has been observed that despite advisories from the UNGCI, there have been instances where some of the UN staff have not been responding responsibly to these radio checks by the UNGCI. Some of these

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aberrations are (i) delayed or no response, (ii) one UN person accounting for not only himself but for a group of people, often 10 or 15 in numbers and (iii) national staff responding and accounting for international staff members.

5. The casual manner in which the security issues, which are of vital importance are handled by some of the staff members, not only negates the objective of the radio checks, but indicates that international UN staff members do not take security issues seriously. It is stressed here, that personal security has to be personal only and the staff member concerned alone can account for him or herself. Further, accounting for others in cases of emergencies, also has security and legal implications which all staff members should be made aware of. Some of these would be (i) non-confirmation of operational radio sets at a given time, which could be a critical information in time of emergencies, (ii) non-verification of all staff accounted for in a group, as there is no way for UNGCI to cross check this system of group accounting on radio and (iii) absence of adequate trail for investigations in cases of emergencies and mishaps.

6. It was also found that in the short time the radio check is done by UNGCI, there is no audit trail available with UNGCI that indicates which Official has accounted for other staff members. This is a serious loophole in security matters.

We recommend that UNOHCI, in its role as the co-ordinating agency, inform all UN international staff members of all Agencies that they can only respond to the radio checks in their personal capacity alone and not for other staff members. Further, each staff should use his/her personal radio to respond to enable UNGCI to be aware of the operational 'radio sets' at a given point of time. These measures would avoid unnecessary security and legal risks, which the staff members are taking, when they respond/account for other personnel and would also enable UNGCI to discharge their responsibilities more effectively.
(AF00/050/5/101)

Assessment of Communications operations in emergencies

7. At the request of the Resident Auditor, a special unannounced radio check for all international staff at Erbil was carried out at 22:00 hours on 26 November 2000 to assess whether the staff members are keeping their radios in operation at all the times as advised and to see if UNGCI is in a position to reach out to all staff members, in case of emergencies. The time was so chosen, as to expect almost all staff to be awake.

8. The results of this special radio check found that out of 124 international staff (other than 30 UNGCI staff), 84 staff members did not respond. Five of these 84 who did not respond initially, did so at the end of the radio check. That still leaves around 79 international staff that did not respond at all. This is a substantial percentage (63.7 per cent) of the total international staff who could not be reached by UNGCI. The obvious reasons for this would be (i) switched off radio sets or (ii) faulty radio sets. This is indicated by the fact that all (100%) international staff did respond/check when the radio check was carried out at the usual timing of 20:00 hours, the same day.

9. It is noted with satisfaction that all 30 UNGCI staff responded to this random radio check. The percentage of people not responding to at this random radio check, agency wise was as follows:-

Name of the Organisation	Total number of international staff present	Number of international staff which did not respond	Percentage of international staff which did not respond
UNOHCI	20	13	65.0
UNICEF	21	10	47.6
WFP	9	8	89.0
WHO	9	7	77.8
FAO	14	8	57.0
UNHCR	1	1	100.0
HABITAT	4	3	75.0
UNESCO	7	4	57.0
UNDP	19	14	73.7
UNOPS/GFS	20	16	80.0
TOTALS	124	84	67.7

10. A few key officials, in the UN organizations, have been provided with the cordless telephones, which makes it possible for them to be informed simultaneously by land lines in case of emergencies. The fact, however, remains that for the majority of international staff, the radio is the only means of communication, outside the office, as the residences do not have telephone lines.

11. We note that the UNGCI maintains the list of addresses of all UN international Staff staying in Erbil and uses it to physically go to peoples' houses to verify, once a person fails to respond on the radio check at 20:00 hours. However, in view of the fact that only two UNGCI staff are on duty at a given point of time for the radio operations, these physical verification might not always be possible, more so in emergency situations, where they may be tasked to execute various other work.

12. The importance of keeping the radio set on, does not need further emphasis, as the operations of the UN in North Iraq are under Phase IV (Programme suspension, allowing only humanitarian or security operations) of the UN security Management System.

We recommend that UNOHCI in its role as the co-ordination Agency:

(i) inform UN international staff members of all Agencies to always keep their radio sets in operational on position and take additional measures such as training to stress on staff the importance of security and abiding by security measures. (AF00/050/5/102); and

(ii) that the UNOHCI Communications and UNGCI examine the use of a 'pager' facility on the radio sets which would allow UN staff members to keep the radios 'silent' unless there is an emergency and UNGCI wants to reach them. (AF00/050/5/103).

Other issues:-

13. We reviewed and discussed other security issues with Chief of UNGCI. Some significant observations and recommendations flowing out of these are as follows:-

Hiring of Local guards and housekeepers at residences

14. The UN Security Coordinator in September 1999 had approved certain security measures for residential security in Iraq, in accordance with the field security handbook. Accordingly, international staff members are entitled to reimbursement of 80 per cent of the cost of hiring one security guard per residence of international staff, upto a maximum of \$ 300 per month (maximum reimbursement \$ 240 per month). It was ascertained that while few of the staff have engaged these security guards, many of them have not been screened by UNGCI. As UNGCI is in overall charge of the security aspects of UN property and Staff in North Iraq, there is a need to hire the guards for residences through UNGCI or at least keep UNGCI informed. It was also observed that many international staff engage 'house keepers' privately. While this may be a good security measure, while staff is away, it is felt that UNGCI should also be involved in the process.

We recommend that UNOHCI:

- (i) Inform UN agencies and international staff to engage guards at the residences of staff members through UNGCI which may be done through the security focal points of each agency (AF00/050/5/104); and
- (ii) Request UNGCI to maintain a database of all guards and housekeepers including their names, addresses etc to help them to investigate cases, should the need arise. (AF00/050/5/105)

Access control for contractor and service personnel

15. It was also observed that with new construction/renovation activity, which UNOHCI has undertaken to accommodate incoming staff, there are a lot of contractors personnel who are working in the UN premises. None of these persons carry any identification on them.

We recommend that:

- (i) UNOHCI and other UN agencies establish a system to issue temporary distinct 'identification cards' to contractors and other service staff in order to control access to UN premises and to keep UNGCI informed about these personnel and their movement (AF00/050/5/106); and
- (ii) UNOHCI and other UN agencies keep records of temporary 'identification cards' and ensure that these cards are withdrawn at the completion of the contracts (AF00/050/5/107).

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